

EU states endorse scaled-back rules for app workers

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EU states on Monday endorsed controversial rules to cover app workers in the so-called gig economy, after weeks of wrangling over the watered-down text.

A majority of countries represented by EU employment and social affairs ministers meeting in Brussels backed a deal in sufficient numbers to overcome resistance from heavyweights France and Germany.

The agreed new set of rules, which still need to be formally approved including by the European Parliament, would allow each EU country to decide its own criteria for reclassifying a gig worker as an employee.

When the European Union began work on the text in 2021, the aim was to set uniform rules that supporters hoped would improve conditions for workers for outfits such as ride-sharing group Uber by fixing norms under which they would be legally seen as employees.

EU negotiators in December agreed on the new rules. But when the time came for approval by states shortly after, France led resistance to block the text.

France's move, together with several other countries, forced negotiators back to the table and in February, they reached a new agreement. Critics slammed the amended text as watered-down.

The December text said that if a worker met two out of five criteria, the presumption would be that they were an employee.

But the text scrapped the idea of any EU-level list of criteria, leaving it up each country instead. Some argued that effectively maintained the status quo.

Belgium, which holds the rotating EU presidency, refused to give up and kept up the pressure to get the new rules over the line.

It was put on Monday's agenda of the EU ministers for a final push to reach agreement.

Belgium's efforts were not in vain.

After each state spoke briefly, a majority ended up backing the deal, including previous holdouts Estonia and Greece.

"Better working conditions for those delivering your meal at home! Ministers just approved the compromise text on the Platform Work Directive," Belgium said on X.

Germany said during the session that it would abstain while France said it would be ready to approve the compromise text after further additions.

A French negotiator told AFP that Paris wanted to be sure there would be no automatic reclassification of [platform](#) workers as employees, and wants the European Commission to include wording to that effect.

"Since there is no longer any harmonization in the text, we would like to have guarantees on the interpretation that will be made," the French official said.

'Historic' law

There are around 28 million gig workers dependent on [online platforms](#) in Europe, and the European Parliament believes at least 5.5 million could be wrongly classified as self-employed.

The revised agreement will now be put to a vote in the parliament, where

it has strong backing.

One of the parliament's biggest groups, the Socialists and Democrats, welcomed the states' approval.

"Estonia and Greece chose the right side of historyâ€"the side of workers, good employers and fair competition," it said.

"France shamefully the only one against. The historic EU law on platform work is unblocked, thanks to our relentless efforts," it added.

The EU's jobs commissioner, Nicolas Schmit, said the new rules "will give platform workers more rights and protections without hampering platforms' ability to develop".

But industry groups were not happy.

Move EU, a European association of ride-hailing platforms representing companies including Uber and Bolt, expressed displeasure.

"This [text](#), though an improvement from previous versions, fails to achieve a harmonized approach across the EU, creating even more legal uncertainty for ride-hailing drivers," said the association's chair, Aurelien Pozzana.

Uber meanwhile urged EU states to introduce national laws.

"EU lawmakers have voted to maintain the status quo today, with platform [worker](#) status continuing to be decided country-to-country and court-to-court," an Uber spokesperson said.

"Uber now calls on EU countries to introduce national laws that give platform workers the protections they deserve while maintaining the

independence they prefer."

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